DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 179 607 TM 010 033

AUTHOR Allen, William R.; Sushak, Ellen A.
TITLE Strategies and Processes for Utilizing Statewide Assessment Data to Facilitate Educational Changes at the Local Level. The Minnesota Statewide Educational Assessment Program.
PUB DATE Jun 79
NOTE 11p.; For related document, see TM 010 034; Paper presented at the Annual Conference on Large Scale Assessment (9th, Boulder, CO, June 25-28, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Criterion Referenced Tests; Curriculum Evaluation; *Educational Assessment; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Information Utilization; *School Districts; State Departments of Education; *State Programs; State School District Relationship; *Testing Programs
IDENTIFIERS Minnesota; *Minnesota Educational Assessment Program

ABSTRACT

Characteristics of the Minnesota Statewide Educational Assessment Program, initiated by the state department of education, are: stratified student samples based on five sizes and types of school districts; assessment of academic subject areas in periodic cycles; subject area objectives cooperatively planned with the curriculum unit in the department of education; and construction of criterion-referenced tests by subject specialists and department of education personnel. Other components include: statewide information on student performance; comparison of Minnesota student performance with national groups; conclusions and recommendations for subject area development; a reporting and dissemination plan to improve student performance in problem areas; provision of information to sampled schools for instructional decision; and provisions of materials and data for districts choosing the Piggyback Option. The piggyback program provides local school districts with materials and testing procedures, developed for the state program, to analyze the district's curriculum. All information gathered by the department of education under contract to local school districts is not disseminated at the state level. Local curriculum evaluation includes: reviewing objectives and instruments from the state program; establishing criteria for district student performance; analyzing and summarizing results based on local criteria; recommending and planning improvements; reporting; and identifying and using resources for instructional change. (MH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED179607

STRATEGIES AND PROCESSES FOR UTILIZING STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT DATA TO FACILITATE EDUCATIONAL CHANGES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

-THE MINNESOTA STATEWIDE EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM-

Prepared for Presentation

at the

9th Annual Conference

on

Large Scale Assessment

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ellen A. Sushak

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

William R. Allen

Ellen A. Sushak

June, 1979

TM010 033

STRATEGIES AND PROCESSES FOR UTILIZING STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT DATA
TO FACILITATE EDUCATIONAL CHANGES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

-THE MINNESOTA STATEWIDE EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM-

I. *Statewide Assessment Component*

A. *Introduction*

In those states where statewide assessment programs have been developed, the nature and purposes for which those programs are designed and utilized vary widely. As it is presently operationalized in Minnesota, there are important assumptions and circumstances which characterize the Minnesota Assessment Program. Among those are:

1. The program was not mandated by the legislature, but instead was developed from initiatives within the State Department of Education.

2. Not every student is assessed at the grade levels where the Assessment Program focuses, nor is every district included in each assessment. Instead, a stratified sample is used, based on five sizes and types of districts, and results from these groups are reported along with state results.

3. Assessment program results do not affect state funding allocations to local districts in any way.

4. Each subject is not assessed every year. Rather, several years elapse between subject area assessments, thus allowing time for program and curriculum development activities to be carried out.

5. The Assessment Program utilizes an integrated approach with the Curriculum Unit of the Department of Education, using a common set of subject area objectives. This provides a common base for curriculum assessment and curriculum development activities.

B. *Instrument Development*

When an assessment is planned, subject area specialists at various levels are brought together to work with Department of Education personnel to identify the goals and objectives of teaching and learning in the subject area. Subject specialists also participate in identifying and developing items that make up the assessment instruments. Once the domains, goals, objectives, and subobjectives that comprise the assessment instrument are identified, questions are developed to collect student responses on identified subobjectives. In order to provide for comparisons with national groups of students, approximately one-third of each assessment test is comprised of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) items, although these items must, in the opinion of subject specialists, effectively measure Minnesota identified objectives. Thus, assessment instruments reflect the objectives and priorities of subject area development in Minnesota.

The instruments in the Minnesota Educational Assessment Program are criterion-referenced. That is, questions are developed to measure student performance relative to specified goals, objectives, and subobjectives. The primary sources for item development are the Some Essential Learner Outcomes (SELO's) packages whose development has been coordinated within the Division of Instruction at the Minnesota Department of Education. Results are essentially reported against the objectives and subobjectives in these SELO's. This process provides for continuity from the specification of goals through subject matter support and developmental activities.

C. *Test Administration*

For purposes of test administration, the total number of items in the assessment is divided into booklets or packages which take approximately forty-five minutes to administer. To minimize reading as a factor that could affect results and to standardize testing situations as much as possible, audio pace tapes are developed for each booklet. The use of pace tapes follows procedures developed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) program. Machine scorable answer sheets were developed to facilitate data collection, scoring, and data analysis.

In the past, test administrators have been used in the assessment program. However, future plans call for classroom or district personnel to be more fully utilized in the administration process. The primary payoff to the districts will be that results for those students sampled will be returned to the district at no cost. Other procedures will remain substantially the same.

D. *Data Reporting*

One of the important elements in the reporting phase of the Assessment Program is the use of subject specialists to establish criteria for student performance. In a criteria setting workshop, subject specialists are brought together to establish ranges for acceptable student performance. Once ranges of scores are established for all items, actual results are provided and analyzed by the group. The established criteria then become a benchmark against which student performance is measured and reported. A five point scale (strength, potential strength, acceptable, potential need, need) is then applied to actual student performance. If scores fall within the range established by the group, performance is deemed acceptable, meaning that students are performing as well in an area as specialists think they ought to be. If a score is slightly above or below the established range, student performance might be identified as a potential strength or a potential need. If scores are considerably above or below the established range, and if, in the judgment of the group, the results were different from what might be expected, the performance might be labeled a strength or need.

Subject specialists are also used for data interpretation, report preparation, and the formulation of specific recommendations for subject area development. As a result, each assessment that is conducted provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of student performance in key areas of educational endeavor in Minnesota and provides a focus for planned follow-up activities aimed at improving teaching and learning in the subject area.

E. *Dissemination*

It should be clear that a testing and measurement unit cannot, in isolation, directly translate results into practical instructional changes. Rather, the key components to effective utilization of processes and data results from the establishment of close working relationships with various agencies and educational decision makers within the state. The role of the Assessment Program in this regard is facilitative.

The Minnesota Assessment Program allows various audiences to have access to common data which are based upon common outcomes and which are gathered in a consistent manner. This common data base allows one mechanism for consistent monitoring of student achievement and the potential for the improvement in instruction within subject matters.

Completed assessment reports, which are presented to the Minnesota State Board of Education and appear in various media, serve as a basis for activities designed to impact upon schools and classrooms in Minnesota. These activities include working with Department of Education subject matter specialists and state organizations to develop materials and sponsor dissemination workshops such that strengths and weaknesses in student learning can be examined.

Dissemination workshops are designed to (1) provide information to educators about the Assessment Program, and (2) provide a forum to discuss those areas where student performance was determined to be low. The workshops also provide materials for teaching or developing lessons for students.

Once workshops are completed, follow-up activities are conducted to determine the impact of state assessment activities relative to changes that occurred in schools or curricula.

Such data will assist in improving the reporting and dissemination capabilities of the Assessment Unit as well as the effectiveness of the dissemination process.

F. *Key Components*

The Minnesota Educational Assessment Program provides:

1. Statewide information on how Minnesota students perform in specific subject areas.

2. Information on student performance in categories of school districts.

3. Comparisons of Minnesota student performance with National groups of students.

4. An analysis of student performance, with corresponding observations, conclusions, and recommendations for subject area development.

5. A reporting and dissemination plan aimed at improving student performance in areas where performance was determined to be low.

6. Information for the schools sampled in the statewide assessment which will assist the education personnel in those schools to make instructional decisions.

7. Materials and data for districts which choose the Piggyback Option for analysis.

The design of the Minnesota Educational Assessment Program does <u>not</u> provide:

1. For a comparison of individual school districts.

2. A teacher evaluation system.

3. For a means to measure everything of importance relative to the education system.

The later characteristics are beyond the scope and purposes for which the Minnesota Educational Assessment Program was designed.

II. *The Local Assessment Option (Piggyback Program)*

A. *An Overview*

The Local District Assessment Option (Piggyback Program) is an integral part of the Minnesota Statewide Educational Assessment Program and provides local school districts with materials and testing procedures developed for the statewide program for the purpose of district curriculum analysis. Under this program, a district may assess its students in the same subjects that are being assessed statewide, or any other subject for which instruments have been developed.

From a pilot project of one school, 165 districts, or over one third of the districts in the state are currently active in the local assessment option. These districts display a broad geographic distribution.

As specified in Minnesota law (Chapter 271 of the Omnibus Education Act), local school districts may contract with the Department of Education to conduct testing and evaluations of students. In addition, the Department may collect a reasonable fee, not to exceed the actual cost of services. Currently, it costs about a dollar per student per subject area for a district to purchase assessment materials and scoring services from the Department. All information gathered under contract with a school district is returned to the local district. Results of these assessments are not disseminated at the state level.

B. *Key Steps of Local Involvement*

Local involvement in the evaluation process is essential to the long range curricular impact of any assessment. Once districts sign up for the program, they are encouraged to include school and community people in the key steps of the curriculum evaluation cycle, which includes the following:

1. Reviewing objectives and instruments from the State Assessment Program.

2. Establishing criteria for district student performance.

3. Analyzing results in terms of local criteria and comparison group performance.

4. Summarizing results and making recommendations and plans for improvement.

5. Reporting results.

6. Identifying and utilizing resources for instructional change.

Assessment staff members hold regional meetings to familiarize local leaders with the procedures for the Local Assessment Option. Simulation experiences and sample working materials for the local groups are provided at these workshops.

C. *Results Returned*

Participating districts receive computer reports which display group performance; these show the percent of correct responses by item and by objective. The corresponding performance from the statewide assessment is included for comparison as well as data from categories of school districts divided according to size and type of communities. Comparative national performance on items selected for inclusion from the National Assessment of Educational Progress is also available. In addition, each district receives a frequency distribution of responses to each question to aid in error analysis.

D. *Evaluation of Program*

An evaluation of the materials, services, procedures and local data utilization of the piggyback program is conducted every two years. Based upon the most recent evaluation conducted during 1977-1978, the following conclusions seem justified:

1. The Piggyback Program is functioning extremely well in terms of both process and product.

2. Responses from participating districts indicate that the program has had a major impact on local district curriculum decision-making at the district, building, and classroom levels. It is possible to document quite dramatically that the program has directly resulted in the initiation of new courses, changes in staffing, expanded and refined uses of testing, the purchase or development of new materials, and changes in classroom instruction in local school districts. It appears that as a model for local district program evaluation, curriculum analysis and change, the Piggyback Program is successful.

3. The Piggyback Program can be viewed as an effective dissemination vehicle for Department of Education assessment activities, creating interest in the types of information and services available.

4. Among participating districts, a high degree of satisfaction was expressed relative to program intent, procedures for committee involvement, the scope and nature of reporting, finances allocated, and staff time requirements. Participating districts also felt that continued staff time and effort in the program would be worthwhile and that the program would be worthwhile to extend to other districts.

5. The process involved in program utilization has involved substantial numbers of educators, school board members, and community people at the local level in all major aspects of the program.

The Piggyback Program has grown from an idea into a self-supporting component of the Minnesota Assessment Program. The rapid expansion of the program has resulted in a growing familiarity with the processes involved. The task for the next few years will be to capitalize on various local experiences with the program, linking the people involved into a network capable of providing assistance to new districts and suggesting practical alternatives for continuing districts.

Together the statewide component and the piggyback component of the Minnesota Assessment Program will continue to gather data and report results to focus attention on the student performance in selected subject areas. The goal of improving student learning will be approached in a multi-level manner with local, regional and statewide specialists concentrating on areas of common concern.